

HOUSE RESOLUTION 28

By Favors

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Jessie James Henderson of Chattanooga upon his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal for his patriotic service as a Montford Point Marine.

WHEREAS, this nation is fortunate to have so many sons and daughters who have sacrificed their personal concerns, and oftentimes their lives, to defend the American way of life and the most inviolate precepts of democracy; and

WHEREAS, among these valiant citizens there are those whose place in history has previously gone unheralded, but who are now being given the recognition they so richly deserve; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding citizen who has proven his commitment to his country through faithful service in the United States Marine Corps is Jessie James Henderson; and

WHEREAS, a member of this nation's Greatest Generation, Mr. Henderson was an eighteen-year-old soldier who, in 1944, was one of approximately 20,000 African Americans who comprised the historic unit known as the Montford Point Marines, the first African Americans to serve as Marines since the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, Montford Point, the training camp for African-American Marines that was adjacent to the Marine base now known as Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, was deactivated in 1949 when President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order ending segregation of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, the Marine base was renamed Camp Johnson in honor of the late Sergeant Major Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson, and it is the only Marine camp named after an African American; and

WHEREAS, the Montford Point Marines endured overt racism and many other hardships during their heroic service to America in World War II; in addition to being allocated inferior

accommodations and facilities, these African-American Marines suffered the indignities of Jim Crow laws in the South before going on to fight, and sometimes die, in the Pacific theater; and

WHEREAS, more than sixty years after his military service to the United States, Mr. Henderson received this nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal; and

WHEREAS, he helped pave the way for equality for African Americans and indeed all races and genders during his career in the Marines; and

WHEREAS, at the age of eighty-nine, Jessie Henderson shines with pride when he speaks of the Lord and his service as a deacon at New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church in Chattanooga. He is proud of his family, his church, and his country; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Henderson takes great personal satisfaction in finally being appropriately recognized as a Montford Point Marine, saying, "We were the first to serve, fight, and to integrate. We had to be the best!"; and

WHEREAS, Jessie Henderson proudly and bravely served his country during its time of greatest need in World War II, and he should be specially recognized for his manifold achievements as a Marine and a citizen; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and congratulate Jessie James Henderson on the occasion of his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal, this nation's highest civilian honor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we thank Mr. Henderson for his historic and heroic service as a Montford Point Marine, commend his ongoing commitment to God, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.